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February 11, 2005

The Hon. John Cornyn
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cornyn:

We would like to commend your introduction of the OPEN Government Act of 2005.

Conservatives believe checks and balances are essential to our system of government. One important check is to ensure that citizens and the news media have access to what the Federal Government's departments and agencies are doing. Unfortunately, as noted by *Austin American Statesman* reporter Chuck Lindell, too often the Federal Government's bureaucracy demonstrates no interest in replying to such requests in a timely and efficient manner. It prefers to operate in darkness, not having their actions exposed to the sunlight of public scrutiny.

Citizens have a right to know what the Federal Government is doing with their tax dollars. The fact that the Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency can take years to answer requests for information should be disturbing to conservatives who bemoan the arrogance and unresponsiveness of Big Government. Every citizen and every news reporter is entitled to a prompt answer to their request for information.

"The buck stops here" is a snappy soundbite, and may have once represented a workable philosophy of governing in simpler times. The reality is that in today's Washington it's hard to tell where the buck is because it is simply obscured by an unresponsive bureaucracy. Ironically, technology and increasing expectations of transparency in government render the mindset practiced by a recalcitrant bureaucracy obsolete. A measure such as the OPEN Government Act of 2005 can help level the playing field in favor of the citizenry.

Sincerely,

Steve Lilienthal
Director
Center for Privacy
& Technology Policy